



NEWS RELEASE

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Liberty Canyon Wildlife Crossing Project on U.S. Highway 101 (Ventura Freeway) to Go Over Freeway, Agoura Road *Approval Given for Project Alternative 2; Design Begins*

LOS ANGELES — Today the California Department of Transportation (Caltrans) announced a proposal to build the largest wildlife crossing in California and the Pacific Northwest. The project has been approved and will begin the design phase.

The milestone was reached this month as Caltrans completed two pre-design tasks called the Project Report and the Environmental Document for the unpaved bridge that features natural landscaping for mountain lions, bobcats and other wildlife to safely cross the Ventura Freeway (U.S. Highway 101) in the Santa Monica Mountains.

Caltrans expects the design phase to be completed in two years, followed by construction starting approximately in late 2020, depending on funding availability.

No public funds will be used to build the wildlife crossing in the city of Agoura Hills. The construction cost is estimated to be approximately \$60 million, which will be paid through private fundraising efforts led by the National Wildlife Federation. A target of \$10 million has been set to be raised by the end of 2018.

“Caltrans is excited to be working with the National Wildlife Federation, National Park Service, Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy and our other valued partners in this important effort toward developing a sustainable wildlife crossing,” said Caltrans District 7 Director Carrie Bowen. “We are committed to working in close cooperation to integrate critical environmental considerations into our modern transportation system.”

Project Alternative 2 provides for the construction of a 165-foot-wide by 200-foot-long vegetated bridge across U.S. Highway 101 with the addition of an extension over Agoura Road; a city street that runs parallel to the freeway.

Similar facilities have been constructed in other states and countries. The Liberty Canyon Wildlife Crossing would be the first of its kind in California.

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Following comprehensive studies, the approved environmental document shows that the project will not significantly affect the environment since that the project incorporates certain measures such as vegetation and replanting, water quality permits and post-construction monitoring. This is important to the preservation of the habitat for local wildlife.

The overcrossing is planned west of Liberty Canyon Road at a location endorsed by wildlife scientists and researchers. It will provide a safe and sustainable animal passage and help reduce wildlife mortality. The crossing is also expected to enhance safety for motorists by avoiding animals crossing the freeway.

Since 1996, the National Park Service has been studying carnivores in and around the Santa Monica Mountains to determine how they survive in an increasingly fragmented and urbanized environment. During the course of the study, biologists have studied more than 340 bobcats, 145 coyotes and 60 mountain lions.

A 2017 study co-authored with researchers at UCLA found that failure to increase connectivity between the Santa Monica Mountains and other wildlife habitat in Southern California would lead to the continued erosion of genetic diversity and increase the chances of extinction of the mountain range's population of mountain lions and other wildlife.

More information is available at the Caltrans project website www.dot.ca.gov/d7/projects/libertycanyon/

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